

THE

REHEARSAL.

1. The Great Question, *Who shall be Judge?*
2. Exemplify'd in *Tryals at Law.*
3. A short Method of coming at the Point.
4. The *Church* the Best *Interpreter of Scripture.*
5. Who is *Judge* whether ther is a *God or not?*
6. The *Author* and *Abettors* of the *Book of the Rights prov'd to be Atheists.*
7. A *Judgment of Discretion, and of Authority.*
8. The *Church of Rome* Claiming a *Judgment of Authority in Matters of Faith,* is *Blasphemy.* Who shall be *Judge?* is only to be Ask'd in *Small matters.*

SATURDAY, April 3. 1708.

(1.) *Country-man.* YOU began last *Volume* with the *Presbyterians.* And I wou'd desire you to begin this with a word to the *Papists.* For to tell you the Truth, Master, I am very much Stumbl'd and put to a Loss by what I have hear'd lately from some of their *Priests.* And if you do not help me out, I know not what will become of me. The Matter is this. When I talk with them out of the *Scriptures*, or from my own *Reason*, they still come over me with this Question, *Who shall be Judge?* And can I say, That I am a Better *Judge* than the *Church*? Will I be more *Wise* than all the *Learned Men*, and *Holy Fathers* ever since *Christ*? And must I not be Concluded by what the *Councils* in all Ages have Determin'd? And what can I say to this? I Understand not the *Fathers* and *Councils.* That belongs to *Learned men.* What then have I to say? I am put to a full stop upon every Point with this, *Who shall be Judge?* And if I cannot find an Answer to this, we poor *Country-men* must shut up our Mouths, and let these *Priests* carry us whither they will.

(2.) And they Enforce this upon us, by shewing us the like in other Cases which we plainly Understand, and which we cannot Deny, for Example, if ther is a Dispute betwixt me and my Neighbour about a *House*, a *Horse*, or an *Estate*, it is not what he thinks, or I think, must Determin it; but ther must be a *Judge* that has *Authority* to Determin it, and what he *Adjudges* upon *Tryal*, that must Stand. Now how much more, fay they, must ther be a *Judge* in *Matters of Faith*, upon which our *Souls* de-

pend? Or else the *World* is left at an *Utter Uncertainty*, and every man must Believe as he Pleases. And considering the Greatest Number of Mankind to be *Ignorant* and *Unlearn'd*, what a condition wou'd this bring the *World* to, if *God* had not left some *Judge* upon Earth to Ascertain the *Faith*, and to Determin *Controversies!* And who shou'd this *Judge* be but the *Church*, which is Call'd the *Pillar and Ground of the Truth?*

(3.) Now, Master, you have sometimes a Short way to Determin a Point, and give one a Clear thought of a thing, such as may fit Common Capacities like mine, and make it Easy to Us, without sending Us to *Learned Books*, and things we do not Understand. I wish you may be so Happy in this, and not to carry me out of my Depth for an Answer, for that will but Perplex the Cause the more, and Naturally lead me back to the Question, *Who shall be Judge?*

(4.) *Rehearsal.* You have put the *Objection* as strong as it will Bear. And if I were Discouraging with a *Popish Priest*, I wou'd tell him that we Allow the *Church* to be the best *Interpreter* of the *Holy Scriptures*, that is, the *Church* from the Beginning. That what has been held by all *Christian Churches*, and at all *Times*, we will Certainly Receive. Then I wou'd shew him the great Fallacie of Applying to the *Church of Rome* whatever is said of the *Church in General*, either in the *Scriptures* or in the *Primitive Fathers*. And in short, we are willing to put the Issue with them upon the Current Sense of the *Church* in all *Ages*. We stand

stand by this, and Appeal to it in all our Disputes with them.

But I give not this Answer to you. For as you say, it wou'd carry you out of your Depth, and you are not capable of Examining this Matter, which Requires Skill and Knowledge in the Fathers, Councils, &c. And you wou'd naturally say, Who shall be Judge of these things?

Therefor to Come short to you, I ask you, Who is Judge whether ther is a God or not?

(5.) Country-m. Bless me! Master, you Fright me! What sort of a Question is this? Can any body be a Judge over God? Can any body be such a Judge, that if he shou'd say ther was no God, therefor ther was None?

Rehears. You have Answer'd Right, Country-man. You shall see the Meaning of my Question presently. But are not you Judge whether you will Believe a God or not?

Country-m. That is, I may Chuse whether I will Believe it or not, at least, whether I will Own it. As Joshua said, Chap. xxiv. 15. Choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the Gods which your Fathers served that were on the other side of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: But as for Me and my House, we will serve the Lord. And as Elijah said Kings. xviii. 21. How long halt ye between two Opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. But all this is only as to our own Opinion, whether we will Believe or Follow GOD or not? Not that the Being of God do's Depend upon our Judgment. That wou'd be most Hideous Blasphemy!

(6.) Rehears. But not more Blasphemous than the Book of the Rights, which makes the Authority of God to Depend upon the Choice of the People, and to be Deriv'd from it. For the Being and the Authority of God are inseperable, and Equally In-Derivative from any other. And who Deny His Authority, Deny His Being. Therefor the Author of that Book of the Rights, and all its Abettors, if they speak their Minds, ate not only Practical but Speculative and Literal ATHEISTS.

(7.) But to Return to our Subject. The Opinion of a Man is call'd a Judgment of Discretion, and this is Unlimited and in all things, even whether ther be a God or not?

But a Judgment of Authority do's Determine the Right of the thing Judged, as when a Judge determines a Dispute in Law about a House or an Estate. And his Authority is Superior to the thing that he Judges. Else he cou'd not be Judge of it. Thus if any were

Judge, in this Sense, that is, of Authority, whether ther were a God or not? It wou'd follow, That he was Superior to God, and that the Being of God did Depend upon his Judgment, and all the Blasphemy you have Mention'd.

Country-m. I apprehend all this very well. But now, pray, tell me to what Purpose you have brought this in?

(8.) Rehears. Because the Judgment which the Church of Rome Claims in Matters of Faith, is a Judgment of Authority, that you must Believe such things to be of Faith, because she Delivers them to you as such. Which by what I have said is no less than Blasphemy. And if it will not hold in the first Article of the Creed, the Belief of a God, neither will it in the Rest, as Whether ther is a Christ or not? Whether He Died, Rose again, &c. Whether ther will be a Resurrection of the Dead, and a future Judgment? These Articles of Faith are of too High a Nature to be Subjected to any Human Authority. And it is only of Smaller Matters, and of less Consequence, wherein the Question can be ask'd, Who shall be Judge? It is only of Matters to which Human Authority is Superior, and that are Determinable by it. What then is the ground of our Believing the Articles of Faith. How far the Church is herein Concern'd. And what her Proper Authority is, shall be told you in my next.

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